

FACT SHEET: USING BOOM

Boom is a floating barrier made up of tubular links to contain, deflect or hold back oil floating on the water's surface.

Such barriers, depending on the challenge, can be deployed wherever needed—far offshore, near the shore or anywhere in between.

By **containing**, a boom corrals oil until it can be removed without substantial damage to the environment. In some cases, it may be advantageous to pull the encircled oil to a different location.

By **deflecting**, a boom redirects the path of floating oil toward a more desirable area for recovery or disposal. (Disposal can be accomplished by transporting the oil to shore, by controlled burns or by using dispersant to break up and sink the oil.)

By **holding back**, a boom intercepts the movement of floating oil to keep it away from environmentally sensitive areas such as coastal wetlands and beaches.

The boom system can work because most types of oil float on water, thanks to oil's lower specific gravity and tendency to stick together. A curtain is attached to the barrier's underside to prevent the oil from sliding underneath and spreading further. Of course, rough waters can be an obstacle by washing oil over the top of the boom.

Hundreds of thousands of feet of boom are currently being used offshore in the Gulf.

Onshore activity is focused on six locations in the potentially affected states: Port Sulphur and Venice, La.; Pascagoula and Biloxi, Miss.; Mobile, Ala., and Pensacola, Fla. These staging posts are stocked with people and material, including boom, to protect the shoreline in each area. Each of the states has oil spill response plans in place with trained community groups and volunteers available to aid the response.